

Ombudsman Newsletter

Sample Newsletter No.1

RUSSELL (DD 414) was laid down 20 December 1937 by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co., Newport news, VA. The ship was launched 8 December 1938 and sponsored by Mrs. Charles H. Marshall (nee Brooke Russell), granddaughter of Rear Admiral Russell for whom DD 414 was named. The ship was commissioned 3 November 1939, LCDR J.C. Pollock in command, two months after the outbreak of World War II in Europe. Her initial duty was the Neutrality Patrol in western Atlantic and Caribbean.

Shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, RUSSELL was ordered to the Pacific Fleet. On 1 February 1942, RUSSELL screened YORKTOWN (CV 5) as her planes raided Makin, Mili and Jaluit. After a short stay in Pearl Harbor, RUSSELL covered forces establishing an air base on Canton Island. RUSSELL next joined LEXINGTON (CV 2) and aided aircraft returning from bombing runs against newly established Japanese bases on the Huon Gulf.

After screening LEXINGTON in the ANZAC area throughout April, RUSSELL detached on 3 May to provide protection for the tanker NEOSHO during fueling operations with Task Force 11. RUSSELL joined Task Force 17 on 5 May. Two days later, RUSSELL participated in the Battle of Coral Sea, engaging numerous aircraft which threatened YORKTOWN and LEXINGTON. During the battle, LEXINGTON was badly damaged by torpedo plane and dive bomber attack and was lost; YORKTOWN was heavily damaged, but survived. RUSSELL rescued 170 survivors from LEXINGTON and then returned to Pearl Harbor for three days before joining Task force 16 and 17 to meet the enemy at Midway. On 4 June, she provided defense against an ongoing air attack on the patched-up YORKTOWN. YORKTOWN was eventually lost after a long pounding from torpedo planes; RUSSELL rescued 492 of YORKTOWN'S crew and returned to Pearl Harbor.

RUSSELL sortied again with Task Force 17 on 17 August 1942, screening HORNET (CV 8). On 6 September, while conducting a continuous submarine search. RUSSELL gained subsurface contact and dropped depth charges. An oil slick a mile long and half a mile wide appeared on the surface, and contact with the enemy submarine was lost.

Throughout the remainder of 1942, RUSSELL continued to operate in support of the Guadalcanal campaign. On 25 and 26 October 1942, while participating in the Battle of the Santa Cruz Islands, RUSSELL again took part in carrier rescue operations, saving nearly 500 crew members from the stricken HORNET. After stopping in Noumea for repairs to her superstructure which was damaged during the daring rescue. RUSSELL escorted convoys to Guadalcanal, Tulagi and Australia. During December and throughout January 1943, she screened convoys to Guadalcanal and Tulagi, and then to Rennel. In February, she screened ENTERPRISE and then escorted convoys to Australia and back.

On 1 May 1943, RUSSELL set sail for Mare Island, California for overhaul. At the end of July, RUSSELL completed overhaul and steamed north to join forces staging for the "invasion" of Kiska. After Aleutian patrol duty and escort duty for landing craft and transports, she joined troop transports off the coast of Betio, Tarawa, screening heavy units shelling the shoreline. She provided gunfire support and screened transports as they filled with Marine casualties. RUSSELL next proceeded to the Marshall Islands and then to California. On 13 January, RUSSELL left California and escorted Task Group 53.5, stopped in Hawaii for training, and headed west. RUSSELL next conducted gunfire support missions and screened heavy units off the coast of Kwajalein, and afterwards returned to Pearl Harbor before being directed on to Puget Sound for repairs.

In March of 1944, with repairs complete, RUSSELL returned to Hawaii and, from there, served as escort for units proceeding to New Guinea where she rejoined Destroyer Squadron Two. Upon reporting, she commenced an extremely difficult five month LST escort duty off the navigationally demanding coast of new Guinea. On 27 May, RUSSELL shelled Padiator Island, patrolled between Pai and Pandiadori Islands, blasted targets on Biak, and was underway to return to Humboldt Bay. In June, RUSSELL provided cover for heavy units in operations at Biak and Wakde. She also participated in the bombardment of the Toem area, then resumed escort runs along the coast. After more gunfire support duty, RUSSELL participated in Operation "Globetrotter," the capture of Sansapor.

After duty in the Philippines, Talcloban, Alabat Point, San Pedro Bay, Leyte Gulf, and New Guinea, RUSSELL departed for Aitape on 28 December to participate in the invasion of Luzon. On 7 January 1945, she joined three other destroyers in forming an interceptor force to destroy any enemy ship attempting a sortie against the convoy from Manila Bay. At 2230 the enemy destroyer HINOKI was detected and fired upon. Twenty minutes later, HINOKI sank.

On the 9th of January, RUSSELL assumed screening duties off the Lingayen Gulf. For nine long days she patrolled, illuminated, and fought off kamikazes. From the 18th to the 23rd, she escorted damaged ships back to Leyte and subsequently saw duty off Nasugbu point and Lingayen Gulf. RUSSELL returned to Leyte on the 2nd of February and proceeded to New Guinea and then to the Solomons. Next, RUSSELL sailed for Guadalcanal, arriving 15 February 1945 for Operation "Iceberg," the Okinawa offensive.

After service off of the Hagushi beaches and Kerama Retto, RUSSELL detached 28 May for the United States for overhaul. While in the shipyard in Seattle, the war ended in the Pacific. RUSSELL ended her unmatched, sustained service with a decommissioning service on the 15th of November 1945. Her arduous sea duty took its toll on the ship's condition and she was subsequently sold for scrap to National Metal & Steel Corp.

RUSSELL earned an extraordinary 16 battle stars for her service in World War II.